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State Budget Agreement Reached

Education remains top priority; no new taxes on Michigan families

LANSING – Republican lawmakers and the governor reached an agreement today on a state budget that places heavy emphasis on education, health care, economic and job development and the environment – without raising any new taxes on Michigan families, Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, said.

“The budget priorities outlined reinforce the importance of education at every level in Michigan,” Kuipers said. “The opportunity presented by the Merit Award Scholarship will continue to impact students across the state, as their dreams of attending college become reality.”

Many of the issues fought for by the Republican legislature were agreed upon, including funding to preserve the Merit Award Scholarship at the \$2,500 level, keeping scheduled road projects on track and, most importantly, balancing the state budget without any new taxes.

Among the provisions hammered out by legislative leaders and the governor include:

- Restoring the Merit Scholarship Award so that each student who qualifies will receive the \$2,500 amount,
- Restoring 17 of the 34 deferred road projects that will increase motorist safety and create a viable state infrastructure for the movement of commerce,
- Approving the Driver Responsibility Program and the Claim It Correctly Program,
- Creating a funding floor for Higher Education which will ensure all institutions of higher education receive more than the administration’s original recommendation.

Legislators met the challenge of the current budget situation, solved the problems and put money away into the Medicaid Trust Fund, Budget Stabilization Fund and the Education Savings Fund for the Future, Kuipers noted.

“The Higher Education budget in particular represents a victory for students enrolled in Grand Valley State University and the Grand Rapids community,” Kuipers said. “The creation of a new floor funding level for all state universities and colleges brought an additional \$5 million to GVSU. The new funding level will help the university continue its outstanding efforts in educating tomorrow’s leaders.”